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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
09/910,904	07/24/2001	Kan Yasui	ASAM.0012	3566

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EXAMINER

UMEZ ERONNI, LYNETTE T

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

1765

DATE MAILED: 05/09/2003

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/910,904

Applicant(s)

YASUI ET AL.

Examiner

Lynette T. Umez-Eronini

Art Unit

1765

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133).
- Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☐ Responsive to communication(s) filed on ____.
- 2a) ☐ This action is FINAL. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) ____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-20 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) ____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) ____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on ____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- 11) ☐ The proposed drawing correction filed on ____ is: a) ☐ approved b) ☐ disapproved by the Examiner.
- If approved, corrected drawings are required in reply to this Office action.
- 12) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 119 and 120

- 13) ☒ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☒ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☒ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. ____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).
- * See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.
- 14) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(e) (to a provisional application).
- a) ☐ The translation of the foreign language provisional application has been received.
- 15) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for domestic priority under 35 U.S.C. §§ 120 and/or 121.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☒ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449) Paper No(s) 5.
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s). ____.
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

1. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(b) the invention was patented or described in a printed publication in this or a foreign country or in public use or on sale in this country, more than one year prior to the date of application for patent in the United States.

2. Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Sasaki et al. (US 5,607,718).

Sasaki teaches, "The present invention relates to a polishing method as one semiconductor fabrication technique . . . (column 1, lines 11-15). "The present invention also provides a polishing agent storage vessel for storing a polishing agent, . . . a polishing agent supply pipe for supplying the polishing agent from the polishing agent storage vessel onto the turntable . . . (column 3, lines 20-27). Sasaki also teaches, "On this SiO₂ film **42**, a . . . Al film **44** . . . were formed in this order" (column 15, lines 48-5). "CMP was performed for this sample Note that a material prepared by dispersing 1.0 wt % of amorphous carbon particles (same as grindstone) with a mean particle size of 0.4 μm in pure water was used as a polishing agent. In this preparation of the polishing agent, ammonium polycarboxylate was used as the dispersant" (column 15, lines 60-64). The aforementioned reads on,

a process for producing a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of: using a grindstone formed of abrasive grains and a binder for binding and retaining the

abrasive grains; feeding a dispersant-containing processing liquid to a surface of the grindstone; and polishing and planarizing the surface of a semiconductor wafer so as to expose at least two different thin films formed on the surface of the semiconductor wafer during a part or whole of processing time, **as in claim 1**;

wherein a surfactant is employed as the dispersant added to the processing liquid, **in claim 5**.

Since Sasaki uses ammonium carboxylate as a dispersant in a polishing agent as in the claimed invention, then using Sasaki's ammonium carboxylate dispersant, reads on,

wherein a polycarboxylate is employed as the dispersant added to the processing liquid, **as in claim 6**;

wherein ammonium polyacrylate is used as the polycarboxylate, **as in claim 7**; and would inherently result in ammonium polyacrylate has a molecular weight ranging from 100 to 200000, **as in claim 9**.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Art Unit: 1765

4. Claims 2 and 10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sasaki ('718) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Hosali et al (US 6,132, 637).

Sasaki differs in failing to teach wherein said at least two different thin films include a film mainly containing silicon dioxide and a film mainly containing silicon nitride, in claim 2; and failing to specify the grindstone, as recited in claim 10.

Hosali teaches, "A composition is provided for polishing a composite comprised of silica and silicon nitride comprising: an aqueous medium, abrasive particles, a surfactant, and . . . a complexing agent (Abstract) and ". . . ceria was used for the abrasive particles in the slurry . . . Any other polishing abrasive, such as alumina, zirconia, and barium carbonate could also be used (column 2, lines 62-67).

It is the examiner's position that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to modify Sasaki by using Hosali's method of polishing at least two different thin films of silicon dioxide and silicon nitride and using other abrasive particles as taught by Hosali for the purpose of selectively polishing silicon dioxide relative to silicon nitride (column 2, lines 7-12).

5. Claims 2, 3, 4, and 8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sasaki ('718) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Kimura (US 5,869,392).

Sasaki differs in failing to teach wherein a concentration of the dispersant in the processing liquid is changed during processing, in claim 3; wherein at least 99% of the abrasive grains has a particle size of 0.001 μm or greater but not greater than 1 μm , in

Art Unit: 1765

claim 4; and wherein the concentration of ammonium polyacrylate ranges from 0.05 wt. % to 5 wt. %, in claim 8.

Kimura teaches, " . . . In the CMP process, chemical polishing variables include the kind, pH, and composition of solvent; and mechanical polishing variables include the kind and concentration of slurry . . . (column 4, lines 11-16), which provides evidence that the concentration of a polishing slurry is a so-called "result effective variable."

It is the examiner's position that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to modify Sasaki by using Kimura as evidence that the concentration of slurry is a so-called "result effective variable" since it has been held that discovering an optimum value of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. In re Boesch, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

6. Claims 11-13; 14-15; and 16-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sasaki ('718) in view of Hosali (637) and further in view of Kimura ('392).

Sasaki teaches, "The present invention relates to a polishing method as one semiconductor fabrication technique . . . (column 1, lines 11-15). "The present invention also provides a polishing agent storage vessel for storing a polishing agent, . . . a polishing agent supply pipe for supplying the polishing agent from the polishing agent storage vessel onto the turntable . . . (column 3, lines 20-27). Sasaki also teaches "On this SiO₂ film **42**, a . . . Al film **44** . . . were formed in this order" (column 15, lines

Art Unit: 1765

48-5). "CMP was performed for this sample. . . . Note that a material prepared by dispersing 1.0 wt % of amorphous carbon particles (same as grindstone) with a mean particle size of 0.4 μm in pure water was used as a polishing agent. In this preparation of the polishing agent, ammonium polycarboxylate was used as the dispersant" (column 15, lines 60-64). The aforementioned reads on,

a process for producing a semiconductor device, comprising the steps of: using a grindstone formed of abrasive grains and a binder for binding and retaining the abrasive grains; feeding a dispersant-containing processing liquid to a surface of the grindstone; and polishing and planarizing the surface of a semiconductor wafer so as to expose at least two different thin films formed on the surface of the semiconductor wafer during a part or whole of processing time, and polycarboxylate is used as the dispersant.

Sasaki differs in failing to teach planarizing the surface of a semiconductor wafer over which a silicon nitride film and a silicon oxide film have been stacked one after another, in claims 11, 14 and 16.

Hosali teaches, "A composition is provided for polishing a composite comprised of silica and silicon nitride comprising: an aqueous medium, abrasive particles, a surfactant, and . . . a complexing agent (Abstract).

It is the examiner's position that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to modify Sasaki's polishing method by using Hosali's semiconductor surface, which has at least two different thin films of silicon dioxide and silicon nitride and using other abrasive particles as taught

by Hosali for the purpose of selectively polishing silicon dioxide relative to silicon nitride (Hosali, column 2, lines 7-12).

Sasaki in view of Hosali differs in failing to teach:

wherein the dispersant has a concentration permitting a removal rate ratio of the silicon oxide film not less than 20 relative to the silicon nitride film, in claim 11; and wherein the concentration of dispersant ranges from 1 wt % to 4 wt %, in claim 12;

wherein the dispersant is fed at a low concentration an initial stage of polishing, followed by an increase in the concentration, in claim 14; and wherein the concentration of the dispersant is 1% or less at the initial stage and then it is increased to 1.5 % or greater, in claim 15; and

wherein the processing liquid is supplied while setting the concentration of the dispersant within a range permitting a removal rate of the silicon nitride film once decreased to a low level and maintained at substantially the same low level and a removal rate of the silicon oxide film once increased to a high level and maintained at substantially the same high level, in claim 16; and wherein the processing liquid is supplied while setting the concentration of the dispersant within a range permitting a removal rate of the silicon nitride film once decreased to a low level and maintained at substantially the same low level and a removal rate of the silicon oxide film decreased from the maximum value, in claim 17.

Kimura teaches, " . . . In the CMP process, chemical polishing variables include the kind, pH, and composition of solvent; and mechanical polishing variables include

Art Unit: 1765

the kind and concentration of slurry . . . (column 4, lines 11-16), which provides evidence that the concentration of a polishing slurry is a so-called "result effective variable" and would result in the dispersant having a concentration permitting a removal rate ratio of the silicon oxide film not less than 20 relative to the silicon nitride film, in claim 11 and would result wherein the concentration of the dispersant in the processing liquid is changed during the processing as in claims 12, 14, 15, 16, and 17.

It is the examiner's position that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to modify Sasaki by using Kimura as evidence that the concentration of slurry is a so-called "result effective variable" since it has been held that discovering an optimum value of a result effective variable involves only routine skill in the art. In re Boesch, 617 F.2d 272, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA 1980).

7. Claim 19 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sasaki ('718) in view of Hosali (637).

Sasaki in view of Hosali differ in failing to teach forming a silicon nitride film over a semiconductor substrate and then forming a trench for isolation region in the semiconductor substrate; forming an insulating film over said trench for isolation region and said silicon nitride film; and leaving the insulating film only in said trench for isolation region; and removing the silicon nitride film from the substrate in a region other than the isolation region, in claim 19.

Hosali teaches, "A composition is provided for polishing a composite comprised of silica and silicon nitride comprising: an aqueous medium, abrasive particles, a surfactant, and . . . a complexing agent (Abstract).

It is the examiner's position that it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time of the claimed invention to modify Sasaki' in view of Hosali by using a conventional method of forming a trench isolation region in a semiconductor substrate by forming a silicon nitride and an insulating film over the semiconductor substrate for the purpose of selectively polishing silicon dioxide relative to silicon nitride (Hosali, column 2, lines 7-12).

8. Claims 20-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Sasaki ('718) in view of Hosali (637) as applied to claim 19 and further in view of Kimura ('392).

Sasaki in view of Hosali differs in failing to teach:

wherein the dispersant has a concentration permitting a removal rate ratio of the silicon oxide film not less than 20 relative to the silicon nitride film, in claim 20;

wherein the dispersant is fed at a low concentration an initial stage of polishing, followed by an increase in the concentration, in claim 21;

wherein the processing liquid is supplied while setting the concentration of the dispersant within a range permitting a removal rate of the silicon nitride film once decreased to a low level and maintained at substantially the same low level and a

removal rate of the silicon oxide film once increased to a high level and maintained at substantially the same high level, in claim 16; and

wherein the processing liquid is supplied while setting the concentration of the dispersant within a range permitting a removal rate of the silicon nitride film once decreased to a low level and maintained at substantially the same low level and a removal rate of the silicon oxide film decreased from the maximum value, in claim 17.

Kimura teaches, “. . . In the CMP process, chemical polishing variables include the kind, pH, and composition of solvent; and mechanical polishing variables include the kind and concentration of slurry . . . (column 4, lines 11-16), which provides evidence that the concentration of a polishing slurry is a so-called “result effective variable” and would result in the dispersant having a concentration permitting a removal rate ratio of the silicon oxide film not less than 20 relative to the silicon nitride film, in claim 20 and would result wherein the concentration of the dispersant in the processing liquid is changed during the processing as in claims 21-22.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Lynette T. Umez-Eronini whose telephone number is 703-306-9074. The examiner is normally unavailable reached on the First Friday.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Benjamin Utech can be reached on 703-308-3836. The fax phone numbers for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned are 703-872-9310 for regular communications and 703-872-9311 for After Final communications.

Application/Control Number: 09/910,904

Art Unit: 1765

Page 11

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May 5, 2003

Richard Bueker
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PRIMARY EXAMINER
ART UNIT 1763